

The Sunday School

LESSON 7—AUGUST 12, 1900

The Forgiving Spirit—Matt. 18:21-35.

Golden Text.—Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.—Matt. 6:12.

Lesson Thought.—If we would enjoy the blessings of forgiveness we must have the forgiving spirit.

Time.—Either after or just before the Feast of Tabernacles, October 11, A. D. 29.

Place.—Capernaum, in the house where our Lord made his home.

Persons.—About five months before the crucifixion, Jesus nearly 33 years old.

Home Readings

Gen. 50:14-21; I Sam. 24:1-12; Col. 3:9-17; Luke 17:1-10; Mark 11:20-26; Matt. 6:5-15.

Lesson Links

These words of the Master follow just upon those of the last lesson. On the way down from the Transfiguration to Capernaum the disciples had disputed as to who of them should be chief in the new kingdom they expected would soon be set up. Christ had rebuked them by lifting up before them a little child. And out of that dispute by the way doubtless grew this lesson on forgiveness. Perhaps Peter had been offended by one of the other disciples in this quarrel.

The Lesson Story

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked how often he ought to forgive a brother. And to put it high enough even for Jesus Peter asked if he ought to forgive seven times. Jesus replied, "Peter, not only seven times but seventy times seven." Peter, you do not understand God's law of forgiveness. It is not the privilege of a godlike man to refuse to forgive no matter how frequent the offense. It is his business to forgive as often as he is offended.

The Unmerciful Servant.—Then in order to illustrate for the disciples the matter of forgiveness of sin Jesus told them a story. Said he, "The kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who desired to examine the accounts of his servants who had collected the taxes in the provinces of his kingdom. And among the first examined was a man whose accounts showed that he had collected and spent twelve millions of dollars which should have been turned over to the king. He had defrauded the king of that enormous sum. And as he had nothing with which to pay this great sum, the king ordered him and his wife and children to be sold as slaves and thus partial payment to be made.

A Pleading Offender.—But the servant fell down before the king and worshipped him and said, "Master have patience with me and I will pay every cent of it." The king was so moved by the seeming good intentions of the man and by his apparently deep penitence that he not only did not sell him into slavery but also forgave him the debt.

Pardon Unappreciated.—Now, what did the servant do but dry his tears, stop his pleading and go out without so much as

thanking the king, his master. Out, somewhere in the city near the palace he met another servant of the king who happened to owe himself seventeen dollars. He stopped him, without asking him for it civilly, he grabbed him by the throat and yelled out, "Pay me what you owe me." The fellow-servant fell down at his feet and in the very terms in which his accuser had just used to the king, asked that he be given time and he would pay it all. But this first servant, forgetful of the mercy he had just received thundered out, "Not a minute! Pay me now, or I'll have you put in prison until you do pay it." And as the poor fellow had not wherewith to pay, the forgiven servant called a policeman and had his fellow servant cast into prison. This servant, who was forgiven, now refusing to grant what was granted him is a type of the people today who forget God's mercy in letting them even live, but do not forget any petty fault their neighbors or brethren may have. Shame on such Christians! Shame on such manhood! Down with such a mean spirit!

The Sorry Fellow Servants.—The conduct of this first servant was the talk of the town. And his fellow servants were very sorry. Sorry, not only for the poor debtor who was cast in prison, sorry,—vastly more,—for the spirit of selfishness in their fellow servant who showed such meanness of spirit towards another, when he himself had been treated so nobly by his master, the king. So today, fellowmen are made sorry when a Christian or a neighbor fails to appreciate God's goodness and mercy and demands of another what God has just forgiven them in for greater measure.

And these sorrowful servants went and told the king what had happened. This is our only recourse, "Tell it to Jesus." He knows and can adjust matters. The cry of injustice rises not in vain to him. "His eye is over the righteous and his ear is open unto their prayer."

The King's Wrath.—The love of the king, the compassion of a few hours before, was now turned to raging wrath, when he heard of the baseness of the servant whom he had, in his benignity, forgiven. He sent out men to bring him in. When the servant was again in his presence, he said, "O, you wicked servant, I forgave you the debt of \$12,000,000 because you desired me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow-servant, even as I had pity on you?"

Then the king in his wrath ordered him delivered to the tormentors, till he should pay every cent.

The Disciple's Lesson.—Jesus clinched the story by saying to the disciples, "So, likewise, shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Refusal to forgive seems to be the greatest sin against man. Forgiveness is love in action. How divine it is! And Jesus brought it to earth! Ought we not love him for such wondrous teaching?

Lesson Applied

1. Too many are like Peter, they think they would be very magnanimous should they forgive one man seven times for the same offense.

2. Our offenses against God are \$12,000,000. Our fellowmen's offenses against us are as \$17. Which is the greatest?

3. Some men soon forget the greatness of God's mercy in forgiving them their sins, or in bestowing his favors of rain and light and soil and education and spiritual opportunities; but remember forever the slight offense of a neighbor.

4. The unmerciful servant was not called "wicked" by the king until he had refused to forgive. Moral: Stealing money in God's sight is not wicked compared with the wickedness of an unforgiving spirit.

5. God has a righteous wrath toward such men as this.

6. This parable don't seem to teach any purgatory from which a man may be delivered by suffering. The only way to get out was by *paying*. This he could never do.

7. God does reckon with every soul of man. How is your account?

8. Some reasons for forgiveness: (1) Because we must forgive to be God-like. (2) Because of the evil effect of harboring a grudge against a fellowmen. (3) Because of the good effect on us in benignity of spirit, love and grace, which forgiving creates. (4) Because of the joy that forgiveness brings the offender.

9. Some of us are made sorrowful today, (1) because greedy men would grind out the souls of their employees, (2) because greedy monopolists would from the starving mouths or benighted hovels of poverty wring a few more millions, (3) because heathens dash out with insane fury the lives of the missionaries who would bring them the Life and Light of the world, (4) because governments drunk with the greed of "gold and glory" wage war in the name of Him who said, "They that take the sword shall perish by the sword," (5) because Christian governments excite to wrath the heathen millions by their hunger for land, (6) because unprincipled and cowardly men in office and out allow and encourage the importation of rum to the native races of the world to prepare the path for the missionary. We can at least tell the Master. And there will be a judgment of wrath for such meanness, no matter by what money, or glory, or prestige it is backed.

J. L. GILLIN.

The Christian's Treasure

James Hervey.

"All things are yours,—life and death,—for ye are Christ's." Here is the treasure of the Christian. Death is reckoned in this inventory. How thankful am I for death. It is the passage thru which I pass to the Lord and giver of eternal life. It frees me from all the misery which I now endure, and which I am willing to endure as long as God thinks fit. These light afflictions are but for a moment; and then comes an eternal weight of glory. O! welcome, welcome death! Thou mayest well be reckoned amongst the treasures of a Christian. To live is Christ, but to die is gain."

WANTED

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